

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 NEW DE 06784 221532Z

51

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 NEAE-00 AEC-11 AECE-00 ACDA-19

SCI-06 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01 L-03 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PRS-01 DODE-00 DRC-01 /120 W

----- 125700

P R 221450Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1601

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

S E C R E T NEW DELHI 6784

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3 - EXEMPT FROM AUTOMATIC DECONTROL BY
C.G. METZNER.

TAGS: TECH, IN

SUBJECT: INDIAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSION: FURTHER COMMENT ON THE
SITE AND FALLOUT

1. NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS STATED TODAY THAT, ACCORDING TO WELL-INFORMED SOURCES, THE INDIAN ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION HAD SELECTED THE SITE FOR THE COUNTRY'S NUCLEAR EXPLOSION TWO YEARS AGO. THE POKHRAN RANGE, IN THE THAR DESERT IN WESTERN RAJASTHAN, WHERE THE TEST WAS CONDUCTED, WAS CHOSEN BECAUSE OF THE HARDNESS OF THE ROCKS, PRACTICALLY NO POPULATION, AND THE LOW WATER BELT OF ABOUT 300 METERS, WHICH REMOVED ANY DANGER OF CONTAMINATION. THE HARD ROCKS AND THE SAND WERE CONSIDERED IDEAL TO CONTAIN THE EXPLOSION AND ATOMIC RADIATION. THE ACCOUNTS WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE DRILLING WORK AT THE SITE STARTED IN NOVEMBER OF LAST YEAR.

2. AN EYE WITNESS TO THE BLAST, DR. RAJA RAMANA, DIRECTOR BHABHA ATOMIC RESEARCH CENTER, STATED THAT THE EXPLOSION PRODUCED AN ARTIFICIAL HILL. HE EXPRESSED IT AS "A MOST BEAUTIFUL SIGHT WHICH CAME ON THE SKYLINE FROM NOWHERE." HE SAID, "THAT WHEN THE EXPLOSION WENT OFF THERE WAS TREMENDOUS UPHEAVAL OF EARTH, SAND, AND STONES, BUT WE WATCHED IT FROM A
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 NEW DE 06784 221532Z

DISTANCE OF FOUR KILOMETERS. AT THAT TIME WE GOT REPORTS FROM

THE AIR MONITORING SECTION THAT THERE WAS VERY LITTLE RADIO ACTIVITY, BUT WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR US TO GO NEARER AND WE SUCCEEDED IN COMING NEARLY 100 METERS AWAY FROM THE CRATER, AND THERE WE COULD SEE THIS ARTIFICIALLY-PRODUCED HILL, A MOST BEAUTIFUL SIGHT. AND THERE WAS A CRATER, WHICH MUST BE EXAMINED AND MEASURED CAREFULLY, THAT HAD A RADIUS OF APPROXIMATELY 200 METERS. THE HEIGHT OF THE HILL WAS NOT MEASURED EXACTLY."

3. OTHER NEWSPAPER REPORTS INDICATE THAT INDIAN SCIENTISTS ARE BOTH ELATED AND PUZZLED BY THE REPORTED ABSENCE OF ANY RADIO ACTIVE FALLOUT FROM THE NUCLEAR EXPLOSION. SOME SAY THAT THE INDIAN ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION HAS DEVELOPED THE TECHNOLOGY OF PEACEFUL NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THEY CAN BE EXPLODED EVEN AT A FAIRLY SHALLOW DEPTH WITHOUT VENTING AND CONTAMINATING THE ATMOSPHERE. ONE NEWSPAPER'S ACCOUNT SAID THAT, ACCORDING TO THE DECLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS OF THE U.S. ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION, AN EXPLOSION OF THIS MAGNITUDE (10 TO 15 KILOTONS) AT SUCH A DEPTH IN RAJASTHAN-LIKE TERRAIN, WOULD MOST DEFINITELY PRODUCE VENTING, AS WELL AS A SURFACE CRATER FOLLOWED BY ATMOSPHERIC CONTAMINATION.

4. IN CONTRADICTION TO THIS A SPOKESMAN FOR THE INDIAN ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION SAID YESTERDAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE FALLOUT FROM THE EXPLOSION WAS VIRTUALLY "INSIGNIFICANT COMPARED TO RADIO ACTIVITY RELEASED BY EXPLOSIONS CONDUCTED BY ADVANCED COUNTRIES." HE SAID, "THAT THOUGH NO PRECISE DATA ON FALLOUT WAS AS YET AVAILABLE, PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS SHOWED THAT IT WAS 'ALMOST NIL.'" HE SAID, "THAT SOME SCIENTISTS WENT UP TO 100 METERS FROM THE HOLE WHERE THE DEVICE WAS DETONATED."

COMMENT: GEOLOGICAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY INDICATES THAT THE POKHRAN RANGE IS APPROXIMATELY 576 SQUARE MILES. IMMEDIATELY SURROUNDING THE RANGE THE WATER LEVEL IS 25-101 FEET BELOW GROUND LEVEL. IN ADDITION, THERE IS A LARGE SWEET WATER RESERVOIR TO THE NORTH APPROXIMATELY 8 MILES FROM THE POKHRAN RANGE. WATER LEVELS IN THIS RESERVOIR ARE 100 TO 300 FEET BELOW GROUND LEVEL. DEPENDING ON THE CRATERING AND EARTH SPLITTING EFFECTS OF THE BLAST, THE GROUND WATER IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF THE BLAST SITE AS WELL AS THE SWEET

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 NEW DE 06784 221532Z

WATER RESERVOIRS COULD VERY WELL BE CONTAMINATED. MOYNIHAN

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, NUCLEAR TESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974NEWDE06784
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740127-0937
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740527/aaaaaxjf.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 MAR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 MAR 2002 by collinp0>; APPROVED <08 MAY 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDIAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSION: FURTHER COMMENT ON THE SITE AND FALLOUT
TAGS: TECH, IN, (RAMANA, RAJA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005